

## **"Ari Hest Ditches Major-Label Life"**

**"Hest's straightforward, melodic folk sound bears hints of Bruce Springsteen, Cat Stevens and the late Jeff Buckley"**

**The Washington Post Praises "Byrds-Style Jangle" of Track 'I'll Be There'**

As **Ari Hest** continues his relentless touring, press coverage continues to praise his bold move to abandon a label deal and strike out on his own. Articles below chronicle Hest's decision to **"ditch major label life,"** while describing his music as having a **"straightforward, melodic folk sound (that) bears hints of Bruce Springsteen, Cat Stevens and the late Jeff Buckley."**

Hest's new CD 'Twelve Mondays' features re-worked versions of 12 fan-selected songs, culled from his recently-completed, trailblazing '52' project, during which he *wrote, recorded, produced and released one new song per week, for 52 weeks in a row.* Stream songs here: [www.brickwallmgmt.com/arihest/](http://www.brickwallmgmt.com/arihest/)

'Twelve Mondays' has also been accepted into **Amazon.com's** MP3 store special priced promotion, for the next month. See it here - <http://bit.ly/RXYr1>

Hest has generated steady national and regional attention for his '52' and 'Twelve Mondays' releases, with coverage including multiple appearances in **USA TODAY**, and **PERFORMING SONGWRITER MAGAZINE**, as well as placements in **ACOUSTIC GUITAR MAGAZINE**, **NBC'S WEEKEND TODAY SHOW**, **PASTE**, regional TV and numerous other outlets. **THE WASHINGTON POST's** Mark Jenkins recently described Ari as **"an urbane folk-rocker with a sonorous baritone,"** and added, **"a Byrds-style jangle lifts "I'll Be There," a tune whose punch line is unusually wry for Hest: "I'll be there/To make you miserable," the chorus jauntily promises..."**

In other news, Hest's version of 'Hallelujah' is being used in Season 2 promos for 'The Cleaner' on A&E.

In advance of a recent concert, **The Des Moines Register** analyzed Hest's unconventional approach to success in this article by J. Sharpe Smith:

### **Private, independent Hest reaches fans through tunes**

Web sites, MySpace, FaceBook, YouTube, instant Twittering - the number of technological marvels enabling fans to commune with their favorite musicians seems to grow every day. But there is a victim in this hi-tech reality show. The celebrity's privacy.

Singer/songwriter Ari Hest is one who has felt the burden of this age of intense accessibility. As a quiet person, he finds the public's unquenchable thirst for knowledge to be quite a strange concept. "It has become a trend to have this constant flow of information of what is going on in other people's lives. I don't understand it. I like my own bubble of privacy," Hest said. As well as being private, Hest also has a serious independent streak. He left Columbia Records in 2007 after recording two albums to regain control over his career. "I was frustrated the whole time I was with Columbia. One album every two years didn't suit me very well," Hest said. "It was impossible to progress." After leaving Columbia, Hest embarked on an ambitious project in 2008, a subscription service where fans could join and receive an original song every Monday morning for a year. It created a dialogue, based on music - much more to his liking. "My project, '52,' was a way to stay in constant communication with my fans in such a way that it didn't ruin my privacy," Hest said. The project ended with the fans voting for their 12 favorite songs from the 52 tunes. Those selected went on an album, which met Hest's goal of recording more. But he harbored other aspirations, as well. "There is this stereotype of me as this zany, pop, 20-year-old singer/songwriter. One of 20 of them out there," Hest said. "I wanted to be known as a better songwriter than I was before." Through writing a song a week, Hest gained confidence in his ability to create melodies and he became more adventurous in deviating from the typical pop-song formulas. "I learned to take different approaches, to make the music more interesting," Hest said. "I still consider myself a pop songwriter, but I wanted to surprise people with certain parts of the song." The resulting album, "12 Mondays," also captures Hest moving outside his comfort zone in terms of lyrics. "I would ask my friends about their lives and try to pick up on some kind of universal feeling," he said. "In the past, I have just written about myself and what I am going through." Hest's straightforward, melodic folk sound bears hints of Bruce Springsteen, Cat Stevens and the late Jeff Buckley. He will bring his Americana-influenced pop music with his mesmerizing guitar licks and smoky vocals to the Vaudeville Mews on Friday night. No high-speed Internet connection needed. <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20090521/ENT04/905210338/-1/ENT05>

**Des Moines Metromix** ran the following feature:

## **Ari Hest ditches major-label life**

*By Jessica Knight*

When Columbia Records told Ari Hest he wasn't going to be putting out more than a couple of albums a year, he couldn't wait for his contract to expire. A major record deal may be a struggling musician's dream, but when you can't write and record what you want, when you want, it becomes more of a hassle than a perk. His solution? Quit the label and write, record, produce and release one song every week for a year, a project that consumed Hest in 2008.

"It was definitely a big undertaking," said Hest, who performs at the Vaudeville Mews Friday. "It was sometimes nauseating and sometimes great." Hest called his plan the "52 Project," and fans could sign up at his Web site to receive a new song every Monday morning. All 52 songs for just \$20. Hest, with the help of his brother (who was also his manager), mixed and recorded all the songs using the computer program GarageBand in his Brooklyn apartment between the first week of January and the last week of December 2008.

"It was what I needed because I had a lot of songs I wanted to put out there," Hest said. "I don't think every song is tremendous, but there's a lot of good stuff." The project was well-received by fans, and also turned a profit. Hest recouped nearly all of his expenses after the first song was released. This year, Hest has been touring, and self-released an album in March, "Twelve Mondays," a compilation of fan-picked songs he reworked to capture a more refined sound.

There was a voting element to "52," where each week, fans could tell Hest how much they liked his songs. "My fans definitely don't hold back any punches, but because of that I know this album is what they want to hear," he said. Allowing the fans to vote and give their feedback propelled "Twelve Mondays" to the No. 1 position on the iTunes singer-songwriter chart in March. Hest's unorthodox approach to making music may leave some label-hungry songwriters shaking their heads, but Hest couldn't be happier.

"Fortunately, the president of Columbia let me out of my contract a little early," he said. "The people I worked with were great people; they were my friends. But I just wasn't getting a good vibe anymore. They wanted to go in a financially safe direction, and I wanted to take other chances." Hest has been writing and

playing guitar since he was 15, and being released from the label gave him the freedom to write and record what he wanted again. He also started his own label, Project 4 Records.  
"Life on a major label taught me a lot, but it's definitely a gift to have creative control," he said.

## Des Moines CityView

By Michael Swanger

### Hest celebrates independents day, everyday

Last year, after opting out of a major record deal most artists dream of with Columbia Records, New York singer-songwriter Ari Hest embarked on an ambitious independent "52" project, during which he spent all of 2008 writing, recording and releasing one new song per week from his New York apartment. If that wasn't enough pressure, the raspy-voiced singer further tested the limits of his abilities as a prolific songwriter and musician by posting each new song online, allowing fans (for a fee) to vote for their favorites. At the end of the year, Hest tallied the votes, and in March he released the independent album, "Twelve Mondays," featuring reworked versions of 12 fan-selected songs. Since then, the album has topped the iTunes' Singer-Songwriter Chart and Paste magazine recently premiered a video for its first single, "Dead End Driving." On tour to promote the new album, Hest brings his show to Des Moines on Friday. "I'm really happy with the way the record turned out," Hest said, adding that he voted for 10 of the album's 12 songs. "I thought a few were better than others, but I left it up to my fans to decide and I'm glad I did." Not only did Hest get an album's worth of material from the project, he said he learned something about himself as a songwriter. "There was an element of fear that played a part in writing the songs because I was faced with a deadline each week and I wanted to do well," he said. "It taught me to write about others and things besides myself, and to use my imagination a little more. You can't just write love songs about one person for 52 weeks." With all that unused material, one might assume that Hest wouldn't have to write another song for his next album. Guess again. Hest said he doesn't plan to recycle leftover "52" material from, other than perhaps someday to record a live album that might include a few cuts from "Twelve Mondays." The songwriter said he hasn't written a new song this year, but is confident inspiration will strike again. "I wanted to get away from writing for a little while," he said. "At this point I'm marveling more at how I was able to do '52.' Once I got into a routine I just did it, but now I'm looking back and saying, 'How the hell did I do that?'" But like other independent artists, Hest knows that he can't rest on his laurels. In addition to writing, recording and performing his own music, he is in charge of his own business affairs and those he hires to promote his work. Hest said the transition has been an adjustment, but worth the effort considering the artistic freedom it affords him. "I felt like after I signed with Columbia everything in my career reached a plateau or declined, except for my writing, which was getting better," Hest said. "Now I'm writing more meaningful songs and learning how to sing them the way I should have been singing them all along but I was too young to understand how to be my own musician. "With '52' I was eager to get away from the big label and prove to myself I could do this on my own and re-establish myself as someone who isn't just a 20-something-pop-singer-songwriter. I don't think it's as simple as that for me anymore."

#### UPCOMING TOUR DATES:

June 13	Amphitheatre at Station Square	Pittsburgh, PA
June 17	Tin Angel	Philadelphia, PA
June 18	Highline Ballroom	New York City
June 19	Café 939	Boston, MA
June 20	The Wave Gathering Music Festival	Asbury Park, NJ
July 17	PAC Westhampton	Westhampton Beach, NY
July 19	Towne Crier Café	Pawling, NY
Aug 21	Comcast Songwriters in the Park	Red Bank, NJ
Aug 22	Word x Word Festival	Pittsfield, MA
Sep 17	Beachland Tavern	Cleveland, OH
Sep 18	The Ark	Ann Arbor, MI
Sep 19	SPACE	Evanston, IL
Sep 20	High Noon Saloon	Madison, WI

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